

Break

Schizophrenia in Solihull

Ever since the Association of Metropolitan Authorities moved back into Labour control as a result of last May's district council elections, observers have been waiting to see what effect this would have on local government policy vis-à-vis central government. In particular, since the Association of County Councils remains overwhelmingly true blue Tory, interest lay in what might happen to thinking in their joint body, CLEA.

Last week's conference of the Council of Local Education Authorities in Solihull suggested one answer: schizophrenia. The debates on the conference theme of standards revealed that most of the delegates were united in worry about the way that cuts would affect them, but deeply divided about the necessity for them. What emerged from the voting figure was that CLEA remains profoundly right-wing and seriously prone to double-think. In that it was prepared to condemn the cuts, but could not

CLEA on the calendar

One sign that local authority spending cuts were really biting was that there were comparatively few officers clocking up expenses at Solihull, although it was being described as "the educational conference of the year".

It is in fact worth remarking that more or less few people who would now dispute this title for CLEA, in its seventh conference year. Though it may never recreate the single voice of the AEA, its shaky beginnings, when no one really believed that the AEA and ACC would ever be able to act in concert, are now almost forgotten (give or take a little schizophrenia), and it has taken off and established itself.

There was perhaps a time when the North of England conference was the most important date for thinking local education leaders; of recent years it seems to have been fading a little (maybe the combination of January and the north and CLEA in July has become the must on the calendar).

Now that it has settled down, it is beginning to spread its own fringe of social events and activities. Some CLEA officers placed great importance on the fact that educational journalists were this year persuaded to put on at Solihull a version of the variety performance that they traditionally provide at the last night of the NUT Easter conference. This accolade amounts to a seal of approval that the conference has arrived.

In a more serious development the conference now also divides into regular discussion groups, to sound out opinions further on the main theme than is possible in the set-

Below par

On a quiet afternoon in Solihull, one chief education officer got their companions, Ann Trevor, modest assistant to the assistant director of the primary section, thrashed the "willing" chiefs—delegates to the CLEA conference—in a round of golf.

"I play for a hobby but I'm not very good," said Ann after coming in 20 points ahead on the green at Fulford Heath.

What a shame then that her sporting behaviour was not rewarded with a propaganda drink at the club bar. A bar on women wearing trousers after 7 pm in the clubhouse last August alone in the car park. The beleaguered CEOs were raising their second round of drinks to make a toast when they realised their faux-pas.

Sporting Mrs Angela Rumbold made up for the mishap when she presented a small CLEA conference golf trophy at the closing session and in the presence of Lady Young. Three cheers were also awarded to



The top table view of the great divide: Lady Young at CLEA

quite bring itself to criticize the Government for making them.

This was evidenced by the different reactions in two resolutions so similar in tone that any more homogeneous and predictable conference would have adopted the good old political device of composing Peter Hurron, Sheffield's Labour education chairman, had his resolution on standards and resources amended and recognition because it viewed government. While Paper cuts "with the gravest concern", Tony Dawse-Brennan, his Conservative counterpart from Somerset, made exactly the same point but said it was only the Secretary of State for the Environment he was prejudiced against, and his resolution was passed with acclamation.

Jim Mann, newly elected as Labour education chairman for Leeds, could hardly believe the double talk at his first CLEA con-

ference. "With a crowd of bandits like this" he exploded, "Mrs Thatcher doesn't need to call in her Ministers and judge them on their merits."

Conference also provided a surprise in failing to pass the resolution urging all possible provision of information brochures on schools for parents. Since Leas everywhere have been moaning about the trouble and expense of this measure, and CLEA officers have been actively negotiating on their behalf with the Government, this threw even the cool and confident Nikkil Harrison, once again AEA education chairman, into some doubt. "Is there still a mandate for CLEA to go ahead with negotiations?" she quite reasonably asked from the platform. "We were hoping for a clear

lead."

Donald Naismith, CEO for Richmond, was a lone voice in his group, and probably the entire conference, in disagreeing with Wragg. "It shouldn't be left to teachers to control the curriculum," he said. "The I.E.S. have abdicated on this and it is a proper national concern. We shouldn't dismiss Western Europe experience of curriculum control out of hand the way Wragg did; other countries are much better at producing engineers for instance than we are much greater regional difference between I.E.S.s now because of the cuts, and we need more central direction."

Naismith, who made quite a reputation for publishing examination results at Richmond (he told his group how to do that too), is shortly to take over as director of education at Croydon, in search of new challenges. They should be forthcoming to expect the man who spoke up in favour of central direction at a local government conference.



Ann Trevor: trouble at the ninetenth

runner-up Roy Burton, CEO on the Isle of Wight and Leslie Hayward, assistant secretary at the Welsh Office.

Bridge

This will be an article in praise of bad bidding. To some it will be a mirror, to others an outrage. Please do not all writ and complain; the Post Office could never cope.

The books warn to beware of a worthless doubton in slam bidding; 15 tricks elsewhere are no good if opponents cash A-K of a suit at the start. Suppose you open one spade (West) and partner bids three or four, depending on your methods. Blackwood tells you he has one Ace, so you sign off in 5 spades, wary of your losing clubs:

West: A D E T E East: K J 3 2
A D E T E A K K X
A K J 10 X X X
A K X X

Your caution is rewarded, and partnership morale will remain high. But my view is that, other things being equal, 6 spades is the right contract and furthermore, even if you know partner's Ace is the Ace of hearts, can be quantitatively justified.

Suppose you make the contract five times out of 10, because N-S fall to cash their two club tricks. You score 5x(180+300+500)=5x590, for a total of 2,950. In the 5 spade contract you score 5x450+5x480, for an identical 2,450. So if you make the small slam more than half the time, your 6 spade bid pays off.

What are the chances of this? General assumptions must be that you will whenever North has the club King without the Ace, because he leads some other suit. You will also win much of the time when he holds the Ace without the King. Opponents often fail to lead a suit in which they have the Ace against a diamond.

When South holds both honours, North has no particular reason to lead the suit. He may lead a trump, or from a doubleton diamond, or from Q-J-10 of hearts, and so on. Your chances in such cases must be roughly 50-50. Your combined chances so far are all of the first instance (K, no Ace), say half the second (Ace, no K), and three quarters of the third (neither), totalling 57 per cent.

Of course you lose when North has A-K, and often doubled into the bargain. No points were allowed for the double in the equation, since in some other cases you'll be doubled but make it, e.g. when South belows Ace care about Fifty-seven per cent is obviously better than 50 per cent—you'll be gaining about 70 points a deal—but I did say "other things being equal".

Partners may be unduly distressed when you go down, and this is how belows Ace care about your mathematical explanations. The cards may have been going badly for you. You may wish to end the rubber empty and go to bed, or indeed breakfast. Opponents may be good enough to know you are over-bidding and narrow the choices of lead. Had your minor suits been

the other way round, with the diamonds, South could have doubled the 5 diamond Blackwood response whenever he held the Ace. Now you will definitely lead in the four possible distributions and must sign off at 5 spades.

In all these cases the small slam would be unjustifiable, and wouldn't waste this article to taken too literally. But in my experience you get away with a bid more often than you think, many players do not take risks when full allowance is made for the difficulty faced by the leading leader.

This is particularly so in Trump contracts, against which opponents seem to defend more. The rigid belief that you must all suits guarded results in a pert score instead of 3NT or 4NT or anything else. The following is an example of a hand which would always be played in a heart knowing there was a probable heart weakness:

West: A K J X X East: A K J X X
A K J X X A K J X X
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West opens one spade, and the opponents seem to defend more. The rigid belief that you must all suits guarded results in a pert score instead of 3NT or 4NT or anything else. The following is an example of a hand which would always be played in a heart knowing there was a probable heart weakness:

There are three chances in a heart suit; they may divide 14-1, 13-2, or 12-3. If South leads the wrong suit, i.e. diamonds, declarer has tricks on top. If he leads a blocked heart, he can finesse for the ace and in either case make 10 tricks. And if he leads a heart, he can finesse for the ace and in either case make 10 tricks. And if he leads a heart, he can finesse for the ace and in either case make 10 tricks.

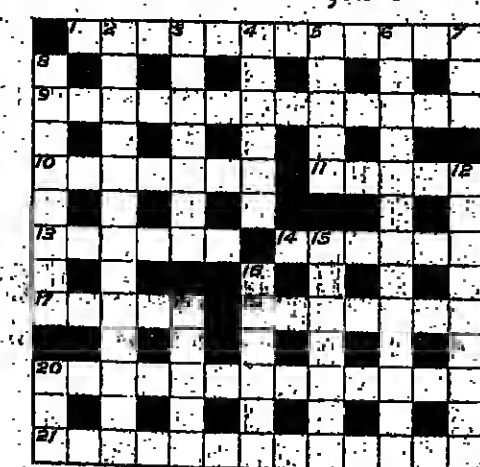
Those who slavishly insist on round security will play this hand in a variety of part-suits, and three diamonds, the best and easiest. On they will never themselves, as I often do, bid and making small claims mislead Aces. But I have my local points of view, and must put them into that now.

John Graham

Next week

Wages, food and rent: Jones takes time off from Python to review an academic study about the medieval economy. Concludes that the end of the world is rather good. ■ Gerald at the National Festival of Youth. ■ Community and Arts Project. ■ Books: Martin on Margherita Everyday Ecstasy, John Aldridge on Cambridge great, science biology textbooks.

Crossword No 1, 196



Across
1 Whence come the numbers (6, 6).
9 Go ahead, pride for (6).
10 Affliction (6).
11 The IRA started it (5).
13 He's most particular about the language (6).
14 Lack of continuity associated with (6).

Down
17 No. 10, long term (7).
18 The IRA started it (5).
19 Fishing net impedes movement (7).
20 Preparing to stand down (7).
21 Tiring box of tricks, to speak (6, 5).

Artists

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Half go from school to dole

This month's unemployment figures offer the bleakest prospect to school leavers since the thirties. One in two of the youngsters coming out of school for the first time this term is going straight to the dole. Those parts of the country which have until now been largely spared the crisis are facing the steepest increases. Mark Jackson reports.

'Good' regions feel chill

School leaver unemployment this month, by far the highest since the war, nearly 40 per cent up on last year's peak. And it is now rising to every part of Britain. The official July figures for unemployed school leavers announced this month show a jump of 109,000 in the number of school leavers unemployed in the last week of the year. The figure was 281,900, a jump of 109,000 on the 172,000 in the week ending June 14. The increase was the steepest since the war, and a further unknown number who have not registered with careers offices. It means that half of those who have left school this summer have not found work.

The peak number usually falls by the start of the new year, but the Manpower Services Commission says it may still be around 280,000 in September, counting the special programmes. The figures, based on the fall in unemployment and the rise in the number of school leavers, have been described by the Manpower Services Commission as "a disaster".

The overall rise in leaver unemployment has been expected—it was forecast in the MSC's 1979-80 report, which warned that unemployment of school leavers would double by the end of the year. But the shock is the news that the rise is now much faster in the South East than in the rest of the country. These are the areas where unemployment has generally been behind expectations, and employers have often complained of difficulty in recruiting.

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Last in the desert: meringue and peppermint cream.

Breaking bread at the last school dinner

The last school dinner was served in Dorset primary schools yesterday.

Children sat down for an end of term meal of soup, beefburger and onion in a bread roll, and meringue and peppermint cream.

Next September kitchens in all the county's primary schools will be empty and idle.

Last-minute pleas to Mr Mark Curllish, the Education Secretary, to intervene and prevent Dorset from losing the service fell on stony ground this week.

He told a delegation of Labour MPs sponsored by the National Union of Public Employees, that the decision was "entirely a matter for Dorset".

The MP expressed fear that the school meal service was "breaking down" and that other councils might follow Dorset's lead. They said thousands of jobs were being lost and cited Gloucestershire where redundancy notices had been issued to 2,000 employees in the service. The county council said that although the notices had been issued, it was anticipated that about 1,500 would be found alternative employment.

Mr Reg Race, Labour MP for Wood Green, said: "We said at the time of the Act that the school meals service was going to be destroyed and we were going to be alarmed. Now, authority by authority, our fears are being justified."

Mr Curllish said he had not heard of any authorities planning to emulate Dorset.

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AND SO IT'S WITH A SIGH IN OUR EYES AND A WHISKY IN OUR GRASSY...

This week

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It would be easy to paint a bleak picture about Chapeltown, the inner city area of Leeds. It is a red light district, the streets are littered with drugs, there has been an ugly battle between the night clubbers and the police and young blacks in recent years.

But the bleak picture would be wrong for two reasons. First, they would be an unfair reflection on an area that has been a focal point for immigrants and refugees for over 100 years and has a largely peaceful history. Indeed, though urban decay is evident among the some grand Victorian houses the area looks far from derelict.

Second, no purple prose can compare with the bare eloquence of present employment statistics: 5,000 young people have left school looking for work this summer. There are 72 job vacancies.

This time last year there were 2,500 youngsters registered with the careers office and nearly 500 vacancies. As the textile trade suffers from recession with factories closing and up to 100 workers laid off weekly, unemployment in the city has reached 6 per cent, and is up to 15 per cent in some inner city areas. The prospects for school leavers are particularly gloomy. And the gloom of the city as a whole is that much more apparent in an inner city area like Chapeltown with a predominantly black, largely West Indian community.

Mr Joe Dean, a Leeds Labour MP, said last week that "unless the Government can be persuaded or forced to alter its present suicidal policies, Leeds within the next too distant future will become an industrial desert". His attack on the Government would find little sympathy with the MP for Leeds, North East, in whose constituency Chapeltown is located, Sir Keith Joseph, the industry Secretary.

As unemployment increases, the Chapeltown black youngsters are beginning to blame racial prejudice for their failure to find work.

Careers officer Miss Nancy Miller says: "The job situation for West Indians is worse than for white teenagers because of discrimination. But I think people sometimes see discrimination where there isn't any."

Indeed, some employers actually turn up the office and ask for a black youngster. One or two Jewish employers—Polish Jews were among the first wave of Chapeltown immigrants—have rung the careers office in the last few weeks saying they know what discrimination is like and would like to give a chance to those suffering from it.

But one careers officer explained that it was not always blind prejudice which prevented the young inner city blacks from getting jobs. "Some have no qualifications, are inattentive and obnoxious. No employer will touch them."

Mr Geoff Driver, a Leeds councillor, who is chairman of the council's schools sub-committee and does research into ethnic minorities at Leeds University, comments: "Among West Indian youth there is undoubtedly a feeling of alienation and hostility against a system that doesn't seem to offer them anything. Schools serving the Chapeltown area have the results of a national concern over several years been given extra grading. But in teachers' leave, not to be replaced, the inevitable message to the youngsters is that education doesn't carry."

"The great issue with many West Indian families is that they are anxious to see both sons and daughters do well at school and get jobs afterwards. When one of them does these things do not happen these families are put under great pressure. In the case of many families it is the boys who are most vulnerable to the pressure."

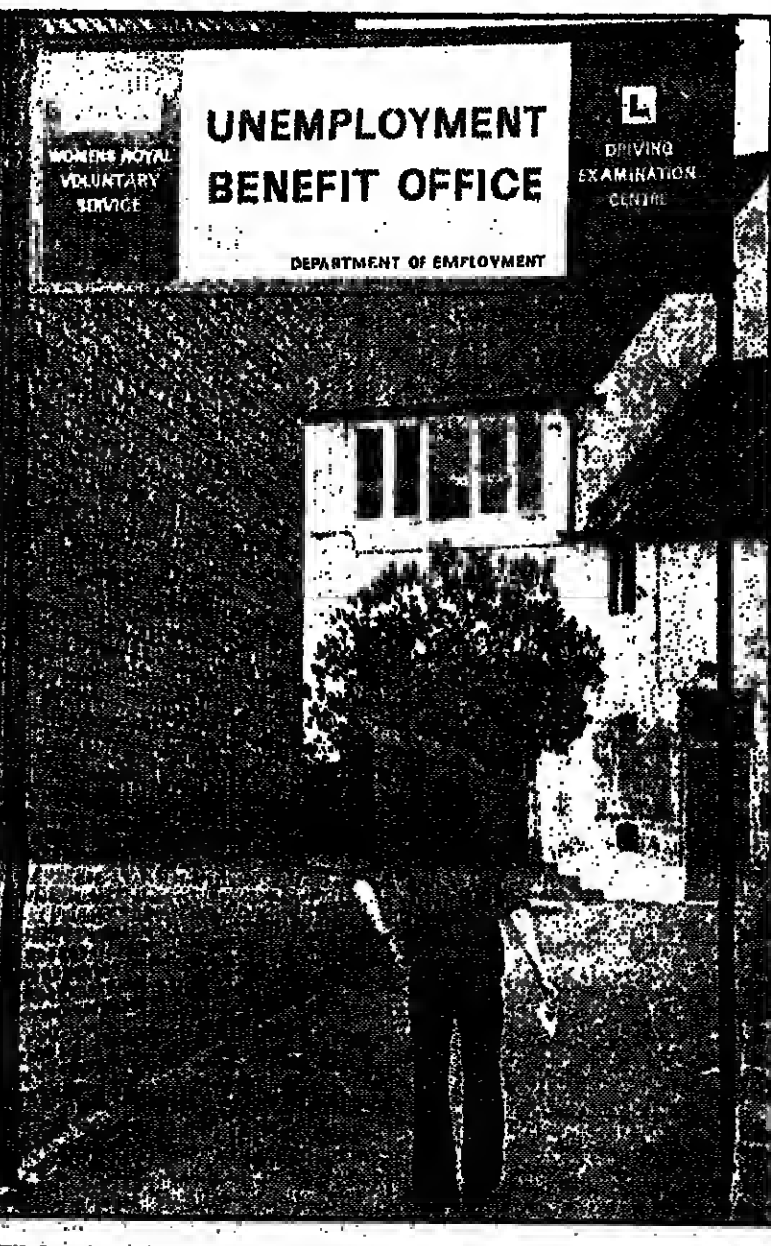
"Their parents feel they don't appreciate the support that is being given to them. Some families complain this tension but it is the employment rate among West Indian boys is up to 20 times that which is among English boys of the same age then there is a different reaction."

A hostel has opened in Chapeltown to cater for boys that have been turned out of home because of these tensions.

Many of the jobless school leavers spend a lot of time in each other's houses, says Councillor Driver. "They spend a lot of time with their families. But there is a third category which hangs about and is likely to get into trouble. They display their feelings in a way that is threatening to others."

In the first of a series on unemployment among school leavers, DAVID LISTER finds a healthy note of optimism in Chapeltown

Leeds' united jobs quest



"There is group pressure on West Indian boys not to have jobs"—careers teacher

The education service has been active in trying to relieve tensions in the area. Since West Indian parents first voiced a lot of dissatisfaction in the sixties with local schools, some of which were 90 per cent black with very few classes, the department has achieved a good deal in the Chapeltown area.

Mr Stan Menzies, a community education officer, explains that staffing ratios were made particularly generous in this area: all schools have been opened to the community after 5 pm and at weekends. Two black youth workers are based in the district (though the lack of blacks in positions of responsibility is still a concern).

A community centre and advanced playground and boys' club were opened and a "leisure" club was started this summer. In addition, a lot of time is spent in the area at Rutland Lodge, a training workshop which has gained national praise for the work it does under the youth opportunities programme in building up the confidence of the young black and giving skills to the least qualified. It has 45 places and in the past 90 per cent of youngsters there have gone on to employment. Now even that is changing. Coun-

cillor Driver says: "Young people at Rutland Lodge are increasingly sceptical because they no longer find that work opportunities come their way, and the potential for absenteeism and the effective loss of morale for the project as a whole is something that the education service has to reckon with."

In a situation that is so gloomy overall it is hard to believe that there can be much optimism in the schools serving the Chapeltown area, harder to believe that there can be much success in building up the pupils' confidence in themselves and actually getting them into employment which makes it almost inconceivable to visit Primrose Hill High School where one cannot help but be struck by the optimism of the staff and their striking success.

Three-quarters of this year's 150 school leavers have already found jobs and nearly all the others have places on a work experience course. "We have not changed our curriculum to teach children to cope with unemployment," says careers teacher Roger Lister, "because we do not experience unemployment with our pupils. They are well motivated."

The school has 500 pupils, about

half the size of other schools serving the same neighbourhood, and has a pupil-teacher ratio of one in 20. Mrs Jean Ayling, the headmistress, makes no secret of the enthusiasm for employment approach which has given the school such outstanding success in enabling pupils from a difficult area to get jobs at a difficult time.

"We hold employment as high as academic achievement," she says. "We rate personal development and employability, good standards of dress, behaviour and manners as being important, as we do the way the children can converse with adults. HMIs are astounded when they come here."

"The children coming from ethnic minorities are often lacking in confidence. In the fifth year we concentrate on building up their confidence. The whole of our curriculum is geared towards promoting self confidence and encouraging them to have pride in their own culture."

"We have a house system that operates with every child in a tutor group. Parents are brought into the school frequently. Children are encouraged to choose their own options in the 4th year. We encourage them to make decisions for themselves."

The school makes strong use of drama and drama to heighten pupils' confidence. A group called "Mama Ya Pili" (which means "second chance in Swahili") meets in the school two nights a week. The youngsters get help with their maths and English homework as well as tuition in dance. The 40 youngsters in the class, many of whom have left school, have performed all over the country.

Pupils have a careers lesson weekly in the fourth and fifth years. Mr Lister, the careers teacher, has been at the school seven years and knows the problems: in the past we have felt very concerned about the numbers of black and white girls who have actively worked against other kids getting employment.

"Unfortunately, the efforts of the careers service tends to nucleate these kids together. There is group pressure: West Indian boys not to have jobs. They meet together in a sort of in and reinforce this idea. It is especially difficult now because facilities are open during the day which works against the kids going out knocking on doors and getting jobs."

But there are examples small and large to show how the school works against such problems to emphasise the importance of employment. A trophy is awarded to pupils who make the most effort to find themselves work. Names of some pupils and the firms they have gone to are printed on the school brochure for prospective parents.

Mr Lister runs a youth club on the school premises in the evenings and meets youngsters who have helped to jobs. Telling pupils of actual examples of names they will know that have found jobs is far more encouraging to them, he has found, than generalisations.

He also runs a job clinic at the school for those who have left school but are still unemployed. He puts a lot of emphasis on his personal contacts with firms and the reputation of the school's craft design and technology department which helps many pupils into menial work for which he often supplies the references when pupils fail the basic maths and English tests that employers tend to rely on.

Chapeltown has been seen in the eyes of Leeds as a problem block area and employers see it as a problem area, and there is high unemployment there. But it does not affect our kids. If they are going to be unemployed then I do prepare them by pointing out courses and the money work they can do, but I don't put much emphasis on it."

Primrose Hill school has, it seems, avoided the pessimism engendering the area it serves. And with the new labour council working on initiatives to set up more small businesses in the area there does appear to be a change of light in the gloom. But jobs and nearly all the others have places on a work experience course.

"This is the first year I've ever noticed any political comments coming from the fifth-year pupils," he said. "What is the point of us trying to get a job anyway?"

Exams are 'limited' in guiding decisions

by Sandra Hempel

Exam results give only a limited guide to an applicant's fitness for a job or for a place in further education, says the Schools Council.

The council's views are set out in a series of six pamphlets published in a book called *Examinations: A Focus on Examinations*.

It says that exams continue to be a major influence on the choices of pupils and on the decisions of parents and teachers. They do not, however, provide a true picture of a pupil's achievements or of individual pupils.

While candidates can be told that their work will be judged and graded with care, the council says, grades are given on the basis of human judgment and there is always some doubt.

"Recent research has suggested that a sixth or seven per cent of the marks awarded in one grade—either side of the awarded mark—is doubtful. This margin of error is very appreciable."

On the question of comparing the standards of the various examining boards, the council says that no known standard is there for the results of the various boards. It is difficult to compare the results of the various boards.

An alternative to the present standards by these rather imperfect methods might be to create a uniform system of examining. The problem would not disappear, however, as identical grades are given to different pupils. It is difficult to compare the results of the various boards.

In a separate publication, *Standards in GCE A Level*, 1963 to 1973, the Schools Council describes a pilot experiment to investigate and compare A level standards. Three subjects were chosen: English literature, mathematics and chemistry. For each subject, three groups of joint boards were selected: one group of boards which were known to be of high standard, one group of boards which were known to be of average standard, and one group of boards which were known to be of low standard. The results of the experiment showed that the standards of the various boards were not uniform.

The aim was to test the method of research and to discover if the results might present a picture of the standards of the various boards. The results showed that the standards of the various boards were not uniform.

The method was successful, the council says, and the authors of the report have recommended a series of further studies. These will be carried out in the next few years. The results of the studies will be published in a book called *Standards in GCE A Level*.

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Most 11-year-olds proficient at reading and writing Maths classes miss point

by David Lister

The children can read and write well by the time they are 11, though they seem to be less proficient in maths, according to a report of the Schools Council. The report is based on a survey of 11-year-olds in 11 schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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national testing of West Indian pupils is being urged by the Government's Assessment of Performance Unit.

The unit set up a West Indian study group last year after concern about performance in schools of West Indian pupils and a wish by the Rampton committee inquiring into the education of ethnic minorities for more information about actual performance.

This study group has now recommended that the APU, which is carrying out major sample tests of performance of all pupils in maths, science and English language, should carry out a special test of West Indian pupils of Afro-Caribbean origin.

The proposal has gone to the APU and is being considered.

Pupils were asked to complete the sentence "The thing I like best about reading is..." It emerged that nearly half read for pleasure and 30 per cent for "self improvement". 12 per cent for fun in time and 11 per cent for independence.

A quarter of pupils wanted more adventure and excitement in books, and nearly 10 per cent wanted more humour. More than 10 per cent wished that books were cheaper.

Boys tended to dislike subject matter they associated with girls such as love stories, and twice the number of girls than boys disliked books which contained violence and cruelty.

In the tests on writing girls obtained significantly higher mean scores than boys (in reading girls obtained only marginally higher scores), and pupils whose first language was English performed significantly better than pupils who had English as a second language.

In both reading and writing the mean score of pupils in the Midlands was significantly lower than that of pupils in other regions and in writing in Northern Ireland it was significantly higher.

There were no significant differences between overall performance in city and rural areas in writing performance. Performance in both was worse as the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals increased, and as pupil teacher ratios increased.

In the reading tests mean scores in the metropolitan areas were significantly lower than those of pupils in non-metropolitan counties. But these differences virtually disappeared when the relative affluence of the catchment areas of schools was taken into account. It also emerged that mean scores actually decreased as the pupil-teacher ratio decreased. The lowest scores were obtained by pupils in schools with less than 20 pupils a teacher, and the highest in schools with more than 27 pupils a teacher.

In the maths tests, too, high scores were obtained when there were seemingly unfavourable pupil-teacher ratios.

In the mathematics survey 26 of 1400 pupils in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in May last year. The previous APU tests on maths in 1978 did not include Northern Ireland. In addition 1,200 pupils underwent practical tests in which the teachers were allowed to prompt the pupils towards the correct strategies in working out the answers.

The report shows that the 11 year olds have difficulty with arithmetic, particularly decimals. When asked to place 0.07, 0.23 and 0.1 in order of size only 23 per cent got the answer right. Nearly a third of pupils ignored the decimal point and thought the order of size, smallest first, was 0.1, 0.07, 0.23. Many pupils, too, failed to add fractions correctly; and half the sample could not subtract 32p from 1p.

It emerged from a special questionnaire to 1,250 pupils that nearly two thirds claimed not to have done algebra at all when they were 11, and nearly half not to have done geometry.

Less than half the pupils knew what a protractor was when shown one.

The report says that while girls lacked self confidence in mathematics to a greater extent than boys they enjoyed the subject as much and looked forward to the lessons more. There was no great difference in mean scores between the sexes.

The document says that higher scores on the mathematics tests occurred where there were less favourable pupil-teacher ratios.

The draft report points to a clear association between the affluence of school catchment areas and pupil performance. Performance of pupils in metropolitan areas is lower than in counties, and again performance in schools in the Midlands lags behind the rest of the country. Performance in Northern Ireland is significantly higher than in England or Wales.

The APU reports involved tests on performance in maintained and independent schools. Mr Peter Kennedy, president of the National Union of Teachers said this week that the findings of the report on language performance were interesting and encouraging. "With the National Children's Bureau Report it goes to show up the scare stories about the last two years' comprehensive in their true light."

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In brief U-turn on the buses

Pressure from the Church of England, Roman Catholic and Jewish communities has persuaded the London borough of Brent to back down over free transport of pupils at denominational schools. The council had decided in May that, from this autumn, no free travel was to be granted to new pupils travelling to schools further than the statutory walking distance from their homes. New free transport will continue and the council will have to look for other ways of making the rest of a quarter-million pounds.

Full fare protest

Students from London's borough of Brent took a giant travel pass for Number 10 Downing Street last week in protest against the council's decision to stop free travel permits. Some students face travel bills of £300 next year and say they will have to abandon their cars.

High marks for craft

Craft, design and technology teaching has been given a glowing report by HM Inspectors.

In a review of CDT in 12 schools, HMIs says teachers had a clear idea of why they taught the subject and how it fitted into the curriculum. They used words and visual aids well and made the most of the equipment and environment available to them.

The report includes a check list for discussion of CDT curricular development.

X certificate

Cinema owners last year refused to show a commercial about contraception aimed at young people. The film, the Health Education Council, accuses the Cinema Exhibitors' Association of hampering their efforts to improve teenagers' knowledge of contraception. According to the council, the cinema owners expressed a disbelief that it was in the public interest that the cinema should get involved in an educative role although they conceded it might be all right "when no minors are present".

The council criticises the exhibitors for their widespread use of "sleazy material" which helps to create the very problems the commercial was concerned with. Health Education Council, Annual Report, 1978-80. From New Oxford Street, London WC1.

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Forced on to the private road

Youth on the dole: the wage factor

leavers is unemployed. If you
wages are cut this will mean that
those in work will be worse off.
is unlikely to do anything very much
in reduce the general rate of youth
unemployment.

CLARE SHORT,
Director,
Youthaid,
Tress House,
3 Stamford Street,
London SE1.

Big spender

Sir,—One thing surprises me about
the article "Search for a tipple"
(*The TES*, July 4). It is that anyone
so desperate as to mark scripts
on examination board should be

Sir,—One thing surprises me about the article "Search for a tipple" (The TES, July 4). It is that anyone so desperate as to work scripts on an examination board should have enough money to buy four pints of beer, two whiskies and a blotto Mary.

**The holocaust:
lest we
forget...**

Sir,—The Yad Vashem Committee of the United Kingdom has been established for the purpose of ensuring that information about the holocaust of the Jews is both accurate and freely available in this country.

In a time where there appear to be attempts to deny the facts of the holocaust, it seems particularly important that the materials now produced to ensure that those who are interested in teaching the truth will find it easy.

A working group is being established to produce a pack of materials and teaching aids for those interested in teaching about the holocaust, particularly in recognition of its significance in a period

The asphalt court case

The Asphalt Court Game

St. As is a physical education teacher who teaches and coaches to boys in the Comprehensive School. I was rather interested in the two articles appearing in *The TES*, June 27, "Something Wrong at Grass Roots" by Ray and "Asphalt Courts" by Ray by Don Davies. While I would agree with some of the points made by Clayiles and would confirm that the doubles game is rather too often as the norm in schools, I disagree strongly with some of the statements made by Don Davies.

First, asphalt courts are ideal for play of all types, asphalt, shale, and concrete are available to all weather and points are really won by break bounce or rally which may happen on other surfaces. As far as the wear of the balls is concerned, surely it is up to the manufacturer to produce better quality.

Secondly, the enjoyment in games is not confined to the beginning particularly with beginners coming from playing rallies. The so called slowness of asphalt courts does encourage rallies to occur. No one encourages pat ball, but good rallies are still to be seen.

Finally, how can any physical educationist ignore a game requiring only two players, relatively cheap equipment and usually played in local facilities?

BARRY HODGSON,
Member,
The Physical Education Association

All-embracing nature of the profile system

Mr. Mark Cerkise the intention to use profiles as a sop for the bourgeoisie — this is not acceptable to the rank-and-file. Heads no matter how sure, would the Secretary of State wish to be associated with the implications of this idea.

Even the most gifted may not score on some important skills or qualities which a profile can often possess and which these sound achievements and useful talents or positive personal qualities, that can be identified in young men and women at 15.

Your reporter's comment that Schools' Current evaluation suggests that these reports too attitudes and interests and skills lack credibility is highly misleading since there is only, best, so far, a Schools' Current report on the Swindon RFA area (which is only a preliminary assessment). Schools' Current in fact is intended to establish the impact of Profile Areas.

helping teachers to become more effective and secure five on. Improving the examination system and its resources are so desperate inadequate for the plethora of education investigations considered desirable that it is highly unlikely that it can make as much progress as would be wished in the next five years.

To the meantime some West schools, or consortia of schools, are developing certificates for all applicants, using as goldsmiths the available work in the Federal Board and the Clydebank E.A. Project. We are not oblivious of the many difficulties posed by assessment for all, but we are aware of the shortcomings of a system which is liable to be replaced by a more formal certificate after five years of secondary education.

Yours faithfully,
M. SCOTT ARCHER
Director - West Scotland Region

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features

"Do you mean joined-up writing?"

Can creative writing be taught? Does it help children to have a professional writer on hand?

Jack Winter recalls some of the problems that

arose during his spell as writer-in-residence in a comprehensive school

You're employed in a school for ten months. You're not a member of a school's department. You're not assigned a teaching schedule nor a curriculum nor a classroom nor any students. There is no formal means of evaluating or perceiving the results of your work. And, in any case, your subject can't be taught.

The nightmare of the student-teacher? The daydream of the enticed award superannuation? No! The reality of the C. Day Lewis Fellow.

On the premise that the students were aware that their school contained desks, teachers, inventories and other educational devices, but that they could not assume the presence there of a professional writer, I spent the first phase of my appointment introducing myself as a resident facility. For two full weeks I addressed all English classes in all grades, thereby showing my face to every one of 1,400 students. Then I left to set up an office, to rest my throat, and to contemplate the occasion when one of my more esoteric introductory harangues had been absorbed by the 11-year-old blue-eyed question: "Please, Sir, do you mean joined-up writing?"

During the ensuing months, of the students who voluntarily booked initial appointments, some brought along old Eng Lit essays, others old gossip and complaints, most nothing but a vivid curiosity about what could possibly be going on down in the English department store-room. With these people I pretty much carried on where I had left off in my introductory talks.

I tried to show them that no subject in the world is inherently more boring than the others, and that, while I could not teach them to write, I would help them learn how to analyse a subject so as to be able to see it as if for the first time and, hence, to be able to write about it. With others I exercised the same method of analysis by performing it with them on pieces of original writing—thereafter when it was forthcoming, mine when theirs was not, published material when we were fed up with theirs and mine.

I found that working in small groups guaranteed a multiplicity of views, and tempered healthy malice with the certainty that one's own writing soon would be scrutinized by the same writer whose work one was now tempted to laudate. I tried my best to overlook exercising penmanship, opaque slang, and eccentric personal decorum in order to unearth a fundamental imaginative competence, and to build on that.

The work overlapped that of the English Department, in that both emphasized the general appreciation of literary values. But my work with the students necessarily de-emphasized and sometimes ignored such important matters as linguistic and grammatical literacy, to say nothing of intelligence and sociability.

In fact, I suffered from my own missionary predilection, suspecting myself of preferring to work with the least resistant students. (I tended to overcompensate by devoting more attention to the famous headliners than they deserved to receive. Most of them resented my proselytizing with good humour.) At the end of these office sessions some of the students seemed to feel better than when they had entered. A surprising number came back for more.

During the first half-term, several students were booked office appointments with me on a regular basis. Some were more interested in creative writing than others, and a few were quite good at it. I made a selection of about two dozen of these people, and invited them to a lunchtime meeting, where we discussed the setting up of a workshop for writers. Their response was enthusiastic ("Oh! I still think he's a teacher, but what the hell!") Word of mouth soon increased their number, to the point where meetings during both lunchtime periods of the two

days per week I was at the school became justified. The advantage of this "Writers' Workshop" (our democratically selected self-aggrandisement) seemed to me considerable.

Those students who wanted to meet with me frequently now did not need to be excused from an exorbitant number of regular English classes. Those who were especially interested in creative writing apparently found increased incentive (and a little snobbish pride) in belonging to a group of similarly inclined mates. Some specific outlets for their best work could develop as a result of their collective efforts, though they and I hoped to resist such projects as an embossed hand-illuminated folio anthology in limitless edition, however good for business. And I found it fun to deal with an informal gang which came together regardless of chronological age, intellectual disposition, social dispensation, and many of the other criteria which often measure achievement and define friendships in school.

All was not, however, an onward-and-upward saga of liberal pedagogy and enlightened arts administration. Because the work I was doing had no official location in the academic structure, I had expected it to make second place to crowded time-tables and demanding curricula. What I did not expect was the resistance of some teachers to that work. Nor did I anticipate that this opposition would emanate from among members of that particular department with which I was most closely associated.

During the autumn term I had noticed the reluctance of English teachers to send their students to me. This disinclination, particularly frustrating during the official first months of my residency, continued in the spring and summer terms, and was not confined to the weeks which followed holidays and those which preceded examinations. I persistently tried to rectify the situation by sending memoranda of my underbooked periods each day to all members of the department, and by personally urging the most reluctant of my colleagues to avail their students of my services.

Though I considered academic lecturing peripheral to my main tasks as writer-in-residence, I solicited lectures to the classes of specific members of the department, and asked those teachers to attend those lessons so that they would be able to watch me at work. I made sure that members of the department saw pieces of writing produced by their students with my assistance. I invited several English teachers to sessions of the Writers' Workshop.

Despite my various naggings, out of a department of thirteen teachers, two sent students to me on a fairly regular basis, three sent students every once in a while, eight sent no students at all at any time during the entire academic year. I could not be sure whether this recalcitrance was due to personal snipities or professional resentments, or whether it was caused by pressures within the department which predated my arrival. Apparently it had little to do with the value of my work, since few English teachers availed themselves of the many opportunities I offered them to witness it, and only one expressed to me any reservations regarding it.

As activity within the Writers' Workshop intensified, the students and I decided that the work we were producing together warranted outlets more public than our own meetings. Four matters were decided upon: the publication by the English department of a collection of student writing; a dramatized concert-reading; a series of broadsheets, each of which would contain the work of an individual and appropriate art work by a fellow student; and an illustrated slide-show of the broadsheet material.

Over an otherwise unremarkable cup of coffee the head of the English department attempted to veto the entire project. She observed that two of the twenty-four broadsheet poems contained a "rude word" ("orgasm"), and that the publica-

tion of this word would disturb parents, in particular those of Greek, black, and "other immigrant" children, and would annoy "conservative" teachers and educational "powers" especially one unnamed member of a board of governors.

She predicted that the resulting unpleasantness would imperil the "freedom" of the English department and the "credibility" of future writers-in-residence. She went on to forbid any future publication or recital of three other pieces of student literature: the dramatic monologue of a fictional delinquent containing several "rude" words; a prose extract from the diary of a student recalling the circumstances of a day on which she had been expelled from school; and a whimsical poem satirising a fictional teacher of English.

Her verdict was unimpaired by the fact that she had neither heard the first two recited in their context of the dramatized reading of eighty-nine companion pieces, nor had ever heard or read the third. She also said many things about her support of my "work with the students", her admiration of the writing they were producing, and how her current attitude was in support of both and of "freedom"—but I did not understand that portion of her argument.

The English department publication never did appear. Unannounced, the concert, the broadsheets, and the slide-show were scheduled to be produced together on the evening of Friday, July 13, defying, among other things, augury.

A final experience occurred in the last days of my tenure. In order to fill out the evening which featured the 45-minute concert-recital and the 30-minute slide-show, I had performed a short reading from my own work, the last item of which was a report of my year's residency. I wanted the audience of parents and students to know with what aims and under what conditions the events they had witnessed had been created.

Included, of course, was my account of that contentious meeting with the Head of English, despite which the evening had taken place. I thought it particularly important that the participating students learn that it was possible to oppose censorship and that they and their excellent work had already done just that.

When I arrived at the school four days later to complete my schedule of work and conclude my residency, I was met with a collective staff sentiment, during the course of which I was alternately ordered "off the premises" (the head of English); told that I could stay and complete the appointments of my final day but "not enter the staff-room" (the deputy head); removed from my office to a remote attic room so that a new member of the English department on a tour of the school would not "encounter" me; and, policed in my last session with the Writers' Workshop by an English teacher dispatched to prevent my "inciting the pupils".

For the first time that year I felt an emotion I had not expected: the C. Day Lewis Fellowship to engender a nostalgic nostalgia for the bitterest hours of my own schooling. I suppose it constituted the final bond between me and my students.

I do not believe that creative writing can be taught. I do believe that the conditions within which it takes place can be created. It is my impression that some of my colleagues in the English department considered that, somehow, the practice of literature is something that can be taught, that they should be teaching it, that I was teaching it, and that my enterprise thereby implied an insufficiency in theirs. After a year in their midst I do not believe I had any success in altering their views.

Jack Winter is now writer in residence at Great Cornard Upper School, Suffolk.

Vaguely ordinary people

The Tower Hamlets Arts Project has attempted to foster the arts

from within a community.

Graham Wade reports

Tower Hamlets Arts Project (THAP) began in 1976 in the socially and economically depressed East London borough as a result of a protest movement.

The Greater London Arts Association proposed to spend a £10,000 grant from a television company on putting up posters of paintings on commercial hoarding sites throughout London. The proposal was seen as patronizing; GLAA had not consulted local people about how they wanted the money spent. The scheme was officially known as Eyesites: locally it was referred to as Eyesores.

After considerable public pressure the association climbed down from its original scheme, and ran a competition for London boroughs to decide which one should have the cash. Tower Hamlets came out the winner, and THAP was born. The project was conceived as revolving around community arts—an idea which included as many people as possible. The aim was to develop existing initiatives in the borough, as well as stimulating new ones.

Eventually, after extensive public debate, it was decided to give £1,000 each of seven artistic areas—dance, music, writing, publishing, film and video, photography and mural painting. The rest of the grant was to be spent mounting a huge, month-long exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, as a shop-window for all community arts activity in the borough. This happened at the end of 1976, and was called THAP's Big Show.

It created a tremendous response in the locality, especially from children, who flocked to the gallery to participate in the workshops taking place there. Literally, there was something to interest everyone. But with the staging of the Big Show, the great money came to an end, and it was necessary for THAP to work out new directions and a programme for survival.

After another round of public debate, a way forward was agreed. A THAP base was to be set up in the form of a community bookshop and publishing project. Financed was to be sought from the local authority, regional arts association and Arts Council, all of which have contributed the vast bulk of THAP's costs from that day to this. Although the project is never far away from some sort of financial crisis, it now employs 11 full-time on a gross wage of £70 a week. Everyone gets paid the same and decisions are made collectively.

Alice Brett, one of THAP's workers, explained that a good proportion of the project's activities are directed at school and other parts of the education system. However, she pointed out that "our aims in relation to schools don't vary from those in relation to people generally. One important level we work on is the idea of access. Children growing up in the East End aren't ordinarily given opportunities to be creative."

"They don't go to the theatre, partly because there aren't any, and partly because there's a stigma which says that culture is middle class. We're not trying to make that middle class culture automatically accessible—there is an element of that—but there's a much stronger one which explains that. That's not the only type of culture. There's your own culture which you can make for yourself. It's a lot to do with ideas of community self-help and making skills more widely accessible."

The attitude of schools towards THAP has varied immensely. Some have been welcoming, others have been a cold shoulder. Much of the directly related school work has been in the promotion of books and reading, and drama of various types. One THAP worker spends time liaising with local schools, encouraging them to run bookshops. This has proved very successful in some primary schools, but has not been received as enthusiastically at secondary level.

The THAP bookshop—which has just moved premises from its old redevelopment site in Watney Street E1 to a new

shop in the Whitechapel Road, opposite Whitechapel underground station—sells more children's books than any other category. Close behind come local books. Mothers often come in to buy books for their children, and become interested in those on local topics.

Some of the local books are published by community groups—Centerprise, Stanney Books, Spitalfields Books and THAP itself—while others originate on commercial presses. The shop's bestseller of all time—and still going strong—is Bill Fishman's *The Streets of East London*. THAP publishing project has already brought out *Poems* by Patrick Fitzgerald and has another three—*No Dawn in Poplar*, *Sparring for Luck* and *All Stations in Poplar*—about to appear.

Because THAP is such a sprawling body it is difficult to do justice to its many facets. However, one person's involvement with it gives some idea of how it has developed.

Leslie Milder, now 22 and one of the full-time workers, became involved having spent a couple of years as a member of the Basement Writers, a local group started by Chris Searle, a teacher, in 1973. Just before THAP began Leslie had a book published by Centerprise, which he wrote with Bill House, called *The Gates*.

Since joining THAP as a paid worker in 1978, he has mainly worked in the bookshop, organizing a writers' group and developing a writers' performance group called Controlled Attack. He has visited several schools to talk about and teach his work. "We go into classes and say that we are vaguely ordinary people, who write our own material and then publish it. We explain about the workers' movement and how ordinary people can take control of their own writing. Then we read our stuff and get out some sketches."

From this loose format of visiting schools and other THAP workers have developed Controlled Attack. The name was chosen so that people would remember it, and also because it meant something. The attack, in Leslie's words, was on "schools, the National Front, Conservatives, patronising attitudes, blandies, journalism—and things like that."

Other presentations in schools included performances of a poem by Auden called "The Journey of a Bus" from Wapping to Stoke Newington, using projected slides and sketches. Controlled Attack's current production is called "A Secondary Education," which takes five lessons in a single day, each representing a year of school. Attention is focused on topics such as bullying, truancy and distant teachers.

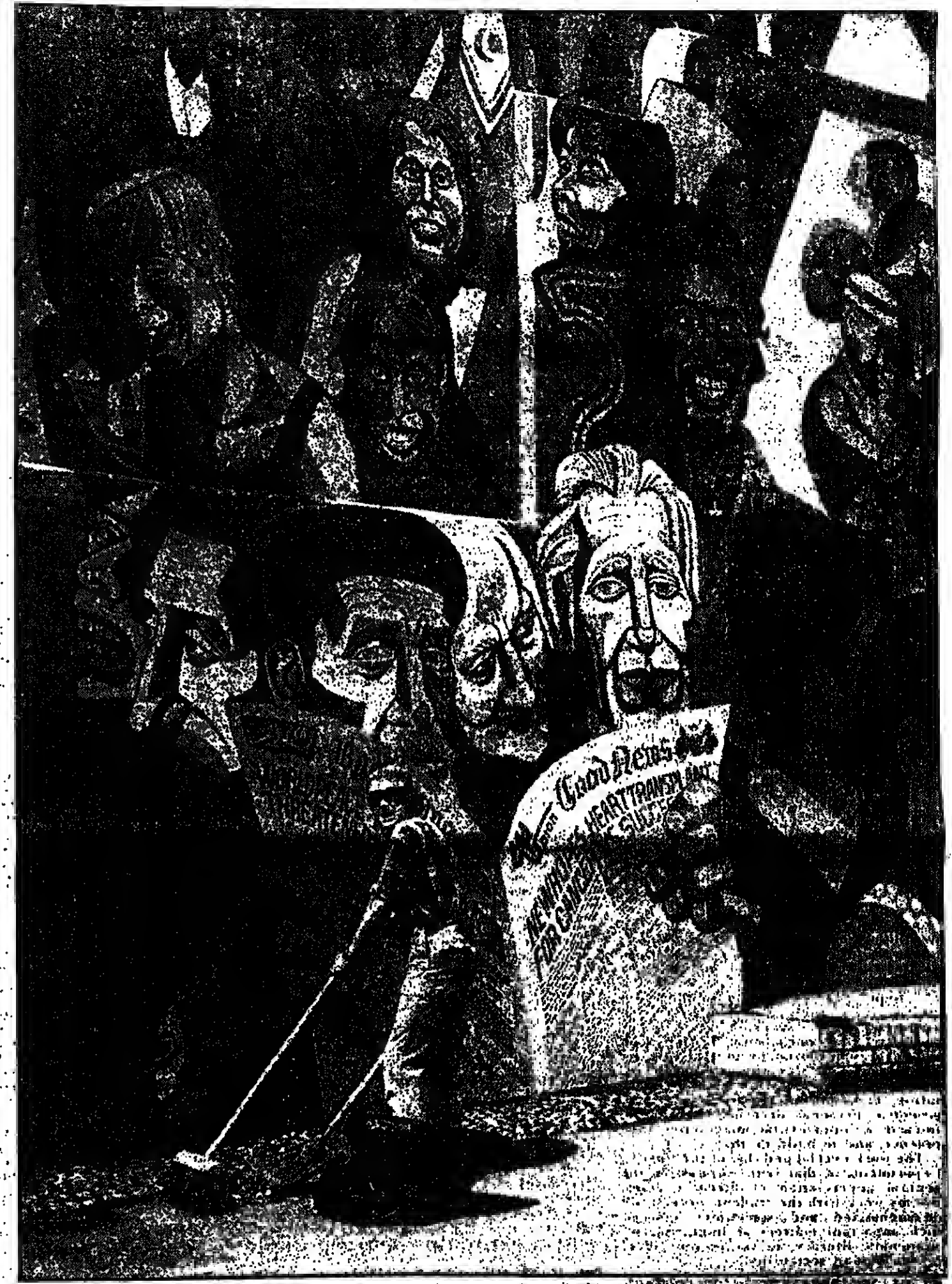
The extensive research undertaken for the drama has led to a slightly different conclusion to the one the authors thought they would finish up with. Although Leslie's own experience of school was an unhappy one—he finished up labelled a school phobic—he and the other two members of the group concluded that "the whole educational device is not specially planned to destroy people's minds and take away their individuality."

He continued: "That's what happens in practice—life is so dull—but it comes from 'carelessness' and 'inefficiency'. Some teachers are quite well-meaning, some aren't—it's all confusion. But some of it is a conspiracy, like 'examinations', which are there to stop mostly working-class people moving up socially. Did he use any solution to the problem? It's very difficult, but I'd like to see something like a free school system. If you had an idyllic A. S. Neill-type school in East London, what would that be? The kids would come out of it hip, very hip, but it wouldn't be easy."

THAP has given a handful of local youngsters the chance to become real writers, poets, artists and so on. Its efforts to foster art from within a community, rather than import it from outside, are also commendable, but for every new community artist there are hundreds and thousands of school-leavers signing on for the dole. Leslie Milder believes it is possible for other working-class youngsters to follow in his footsteps. But he does admit that any who want to "are in for a hard time and they don't stand much chance."

The THAP bookshop and office is at 178 Whitechapel Road, London, E1, telephone 07 247 0216.

features



Photographs by Michael Abraham



A mural in
Chicksand Street,
by Ray Walker,
one of the more
vivid products of
the Tower
Hamlets Project

media

Mathematical patterns

Andrew Rothery on "Leapfrog"

ETV
Leapfrog
ATV
Tuesdays, 11.05-11.20
Fridays, 11.22-11.37

Leapfrog is a mathematics series for pupils in the seven to nine years old age range broadcast throughout the year. Each programme lasts about 15 minutes and contains half a dozen short items.

The series consists mainly of work on shape, but there is a strong component dealing with number patterns and number relationships. Traditional topics such as short division, money, measurement and time are noticeably absent.

Leapfrog aims to fill a gap by providing opportunities for work which develops spatial thinking, a feeling for pattern in space and number, the ability to investigate and an instinct for problem-solving. Those familiar with published Leapfrog material will recognize style and attitudes to mathematics learning developed there.

Excellent use is made of up-to-date visual presentation. There is animation, story-telling, dramatization, film, studio demonstration and so on. The visual impact can be exciting and stimulating, giving a dynamic perspective to mathematics. The presenters use an "in-talking-to-the-children" tone and funny voices, but most children used to British television broadcasts will have developed sufficient immunity to prevent any real harm being done.

The "linear approach" to programme production has been deliberately avoided. The programmes do not take a particular topic and develop it slowly, but are very uneven in coverage. Each of the half-hour or so items in the 15-minute programme is on a different topic.

The writers of the programmes say in the accompanying booklet, "The series is designed to be a starting point, which teacher and pupils might like to pursue further. A good idea, but it means that the

items are not very helpful to children unless they are developed by the teacher, so to get good value from the programmes.

For a great many of the items it is important that the programme is recorded in school so that the relevant item can be replayed. Ideally each programme is best viewed in its rather than in one go. Since the items are separate many teachers will prefer to concentrate on one at a time. The programmes are crammed with good, imaginative ideas but the teacher needs to separate out activities so that pupils can imitate and develop them.

For instance, one item showed a home-made device for printing circles to make patterns. Another showed an animated number square building up a number pattern. Another item showed a cartoon with triangles moving to music and forming different geometrical shapes; and yet another showed the use of tiles in creating patterns in geometrical shapes. All of these provide an excellent start for the pupil to imitate and develop, but they would require viewing two or three times with occasional picture.

"Freeze" for inspection and discussion. The video recorder is virtually essential for this.

There is strong emphasis on open-ended problems, enabling children to follow their own initiative. This is most obvious in shape activities where children are invited to explore their own patterns, but it happens in numbers, too. For instance, one item is developed from the "handshaking" problem; how many handshakes are possible between two people (answer: one), three people (answer: three), four people (answer: six) and so on.

Another invites the puzzle of finding different ways of making nine out of just ones, for example: $9 = 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1$, $9 = 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1$, out of just ones, for example: $9 = 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1$, out of just ones, for example: $9 = 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1$.

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amount of teacher help. One or two, however, were a bit difficult. The teacher's notes provided are helpful in giving a large number of further investigations and practical activities to follow the items within each programme. This style of these notes is also divergent. It would have been more helpful if a certain amount of drawing together of items was done in the teachers' guide because the connection between items and the relation to mathematical topics is not made explicit in the programmes. For example, one item showed how a chessboard of 64 squares could be split up into six pieces of size 32, 16, 8, 4, 2 and 1 (ignoring 1 left over). These six pieces can be used to make up any number under 63, for example $58 = 32 + 16 + 8 + 2$. This activity is based on the principle of binary numbers and though the teacher's book, mentioned it, it did not suggest any of the related practical activities also based on binary numbers, but suggested that pupils investigate other ways of splitting up the 64. This is not a bad thing to suggest, but it reflects how the authors tend to avoid explicit contact with a conventional topic. It is left to teachers to make mathematical connections between items for themselves.

Although the items in a programme are on separate topics, there is some continuity between items in different programmes. The story of the line and dot is presented as a serial across several programmes. The number sequence 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, ... is returned to in many guises: for example, via the number of twigs on a growing tree, or via the story of the king who kept on doubling the number of grains of rice. Many geometrical relationships are returned to in different ways. This is a valuable ingredient in the series.

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Economic facts of life?

by Martin Goldsmith

FILMS
Foundations of Wealth
10-minute films made by Video Arts.
Available from September as follows: 16mm film on free loan from ESO Film Library, Golden Films Limited, Stewart House, 23, Frances Road, Windsor, Berkshire. VHS videotape on free loan from ICI Film Library, Beaconsfield Road, London NW10 2LE. Sony and other videotapes on sale from Unilever Educational Section, PO Box 68, Unilever House, London EC4P 4BO.

In the first such collaboration, ICI, Unilever and ESO have combined forces to produce *Foundations of Wealth*: a series of five 10-minute films presenting basic economic concepts to middle-year secondary school pupils. They are intended to be useful not only for economics classes, but also for general studies, sociology, and perhaps even English and history. They use a smooth, chatty animated cartoon format, along with a certain amount of documentary film (all in colour) to present some quite complex notions in an acceptable way.

The makers believe that they fill a significant gap in educational material; if successful, they seem likely to establish a new trend in inter-company collaboration to provide audio-visual aids outside the price range of the public sector, or any single institution.

Perhaps inevitably, they raise many more questions than they answer. This is particularly true because the approach is to focus on the fascinating but exceedingly difficult question of the origin of money. Many geometrical relationships are returned to in different ways. This is a valuable ingredient in the series.

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Briefings

Radio and tv
Open University

The Ghost Sonata, (Saturday, 11.05.80, BBC2)
Starring Joseph O'Connor, Beatrice Lehmman, the final scenes of Strindberg's classic play are preceded by extracts from the first.

Cubic Splines, (Saturday, 11.05.80, BBC2)
A process of revolutionizing and rail design in Durham, England, use plans wire to help create computer models for roads.

On the Ball, (Saturday, 11.05.80, BBC2)
A series of space hop things to do with mathematics. A football coaching video shows how estimation and develop both football and mathematical skills.

CE and general interest
Talking about Music, (Sunday, 11.05.80, VHF4)
Anthony Hopkins aims to give better understanding of 10 musical performances through a study of the composer's thoughts.

Music in Principles, (Sunday, 11.05.80, VHF4)
However different in style, music conforms to certain patterns of design and technique. This is examined in particular through rhythm and performance.

The Sounds of Music, (Sunday, 11.05.80, VHF4)
Here different musical instruments, including the human voice and modern electronic music, are compared and contrasted.

The Deceptive Ear, (Sunday, 11.05.80, VHF4)
Four programmes presented by Christopher Hogwood explore different ways music is perceived and its emotional impact.

How important is music in the modern world? African Music, (Sunday, 11.05.80, VHF4)
The origin and development of African music and its influence on Western music.

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Family reading groups

Stan Bunnell

Many teachers frequently and rightly assert that television has lowered reading for pleasure among children. This is not true. Children are still excited by books and by reading, if they can be introduced to them carefully and normally. The school family reading group provides an excellent method of introduction.

The groups are often regarded as essentially a primary school activity. In experience here over the past few years shows that they have an equally, perhaps more, important role to play in a large secondary school.

Queen's is a comprehensive school of 1,200 boys and girls aged from 11½ to 18, and draws its pupils from a wide area in competition with other schools. The school has always been a school in which the school and the home are closely linked in the formation of a family reading group.

At the opening meeting 25 families attended. Meetings have since been held monthly during the two school terms, and less frequently during the summer.

Meetings are based upon extensive displays of books, all in their own right an exchange of ideas and books that have been read and worked at close cooperation between parents and the school. This provided the right atmosphere for the formation of a family reading group.

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Nevertheless, in spite of extensive advertising, it remains the preserve of a tiny group of parents. While a year's consultative evening is so crowded that special car parking arrangements have to be made, few parents are prepared actively to participate with their children in reading.

How much of the lack of reading in children springs from parents' unwillingness to spend time and energy themselves? Any shared family activity is under pressure, of course, from the adolescent's growing independence in leisure

activities. It may be a comment on the "buenos" of parents or on the difficulty of genuine communication between parent and child during the earlier years of adolescence.

Perhaps the idea of speaking in public about books is frightening to some parents and children. The family reading group here hopes that many of the hesitations can be reassured by the showing of a film to be made of their activities.

Stan Bunnell is Head of Queens' School, Bushey, Herts.

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What the eye cannot see

Ron Grant

While George Pavlinis is making interesting progress in unifying the cause of dyslexia (VCS June 27), other recent research has identified the inability of some people with reading problems to maintain a single image of print.

They are unable to identify the printed word for what it is. They can therefore be said to be suffering from a form of word blindness. Theoretically, when a child who has normal sight in both eyes sees print, it is received by both eyes simultaneously. This convergence provides the appropriate area of the brain with a clear image of the words to be processed.

This involves finely controlled muscular movements of the eyes. Some children are unable to maintain the movement as a result of fatigue, stress, or imbalance of the muscles that control the finer movements of the eyes.

When convergence cannot be maintained, it can cause serious and unconscious overlapping of visual information. This phenomenon was simulated in the research by the use of a pair of movable transparencies, to represent what children see when trying to read.

The sentence "The dog ate his bone" used to make the transparencies. This sentence can be read by any child with the ability to blend three letter sounds. When the transparency is moved one letter downwards, the sentence becomes "The dog ate his bone".

This form of word blindness was found to be a significant problem with many poor readers. The confused images of print sometimes occurred consciously, often after reading only a few lines. Even with a few successful readers, it was reported after two or three pages.

Why has this specific problem not been identified? Why have not children reported this problem to their teachers? They may have done so many times, but teachers, as successful readers, have not appreciated what the child is telling them.

The child might have remarked "Words go funny when I try to read", or "Looking at words is like seeing under water". He or she might demonstrate this problem by frequent changes of posture when reading.

Again, many children may consider the blurring of print is natural, experienced by all people when trying to read. So they never report the difficulty. The problem is not always directly associated with poor sight. Most children who suffer from this difficulty have perfectly healthy eyes, and can perform adequately when viewing a standard eye chart at the normal distance.

As a result, many ophthalmic practitioners are unable to help in diagnosis. Many eye specialists, educators and psychologists have tended to confuse the physiological aspect of sight and the visual performance when processing print.

An interesting experiment was carried out by Grant to test whether eye fatigue was connected with reading ability. The Daniels and Black's sentence cancellation test was used with 25 children whose chronological ages were above 12, but whose reading ages were reported to be below nine. The administration of the test started at sentence number 39.

If the child could complete the sentence they were allowed to carry on. This meant that they were asked to read the most difficult sentences when their eye muscles were not suffering from fatigue. Many of these children demonstrated reading ability sometimes up to six years in advance of their recorded reading level.

Considerable help can be given to children suffering from this visual problem once it has been diagnosed. Remediation can take place in the classroom, but a referral to a sympathetic practitioner can forestall years of reading discomfort and failure.

References:
(1) Visual and Auditory Modalities in Relation to Reading Difficulties, by Bedwell, Grant and McKewen, by J. Edie Psychol, 50, 61-70, 1980.
(2) Classroom diagnosis and remediation for reading difficulties related to binocular instability, Grant and Peters (to be published), 1979.

Ron Grant is advisory teacher for children with severe literacy difficulties, West Sussex County Psychological Service.

Simply children

by Nick Thomas

An Exceptional Child
Thames Television
Dates and times of transmission vary between regions.

An Exceptional Child interprets its own title widely: it is concerned with children of every kind of exceptional situation, and with what their parents can do to aid their development. The more usual sense of the phrase still predominates, however. Of the seven half-hour programmes, four concern children who can be described as brilliant—an intellectual prodigy, a musical prodigy, a chess champion and a judo champion. Two of the other children are "normal", but in unusual educational circumstances—one being taught at home, the other undergoing the Suzuki violin programme, while the remaining child is severely retarded.

Each child and its family have been followed for up to two years, which, though permits a better, than superficial, view of their situation. Unfortunately, there is a yawning gulf between the actual films—skillful, revealing, often touching—and the lacustrine commentary. Even the high quality of the films somehow works against analysis of what is exceptional about its subjects: what comes across most strongly is the simple quality of being children, fascinating and attractive in the way that any sensitive film of children will be fascinating and attractive.

Even little Debra Sunderson—nine years old with the features of a slow toddler, with no speech at all—very quickly becomes accepted by the viewer on her own terms: a sweet, affectionate child, and paradoxically bright as a button. Only when her mother talks of



Nigel Short, the chess prodigy, who was the subject of the first film in the series An Exceptional Child.

her worries about Debra's future "after we're gone" does the extent of the burden come through. The programme shows something of the child's treatment at home, of Dr. Geoffrey Wolden, who de-emphasizes speech, opposes reward motivation, and concentrates on the practice of coordination and concentration in an emotionally neutral atmosphere. (This is no doubt a travesty of his approach; but it is all the film gives us.)

The results are at once huge and tiny: in two years Debra has gained maybe 15 notional months of development; minimally, Dr. Wolden says, she has reached the level of an average five-year-old.

In the programme about Laurie Summors, the child is charming but the Suzuki violin method comes off extremely badly. The idea, crudely, is that through learning to play the violin, small children's overall development will be stimulated. Certainly, the amount of concentrated attention required from mother and teacher is likely to stimulate any child; but whether all this time and energy is best spent on violin-playing

is another question. The unpleasant sounds produced by Laurie after two years of training argue rather strongly against it. This film is permeated by the strange, middle-class notion that a normal child's development is a difficult and costly business demanding immense worry and effort. Laurie seems to have almost as much work expended on him as Debra.

One could go on; precisely because the programmes themselves do not. An Exceptional Child cries out for a much deeper and wider discussion of the material presented in the films. The commentary raises no issues, offers no perspectives. (No doubt the companion book by Brian Jackson, *Year Exceptional Child*, published by Fontana, offers more of a context.)

Thames Television would add a discussion programme in the series. Whether or not that is so, these films, primarily through the high quality of their attention to the children as human beings, would form a good basis for discussion in various educational contexts.

Clearly, such issues as these are dealt with at the level of which *Foundations of Wealth* is pitched. But the trouble is that they are actually embodied in the films or an implicit level—simply because any treatment of this area, in effect, political economy, cannot help but deal with the nature of the naturalness and inevitability about our contemporary world which, as points becomes actually nasty: as when film of Indian tea plantations is accompanied by the comment that "by cultivating thousands of acres they produce tea as a price you can afford"—without mention of the notoriously low wages paid. And it is the surely disingenuous to quote as a major benefit of our society the ability to choose one's job.

However, these films are still an extremely useful basis for classroom discussion and expansion; which is all they claim to be. Co-education, like surplus occupation and division of labour, are solidly established: it is up to the teacher how much sophistication and controversy he or she adds to the account.

The five films so far made are: "The Division of Labour by Product"; "Division of Labour by Process"; "Mechanization"; and "A Life Worth Living". They will be available from September, on free loan, or at a subsidized selling price to teachers, or to be kept to arrange showings for any interested groups, who should contact Colin Gamble on 01-834 6677, extension 2139.

Dreaded disease

Rabies: Sometimes or Never? 15 minutes (also on cassette), colour, sound, 1980. Central Film Library.

So far Britain has remained one of the few places in the world free of rabies. Since the last war the disease has been imported into the country by a dog.

Only the English Channel, and the control of imports have prevented the disease from spreading.

In a bid to achieve a better understanding of the problem of rabies, the Central Film Library has produced a film which has enlisted the aid of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of the Environment.

The result, *Rabies: Sometimes or Never?*, makes the case for a clear, and a little bit scary, in the grip of the disease and the man is shown dying of it.

Opening sequences are brief, but make the point effectively. The film is divided into four parts: what the disease is, how it is spread, what the symptoms are, and what the treatment is.

The film is a masterpiece of clarity and simplicity, and is a must for anyone who is interested in the subject of rabies.

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The University Lottery

Quino Chaplin
John Wren

Our successful visit to South London Schools last year, we proposed to the University of London to return to the schools to look at the University of London's efforts to help schools to improve their standards.

Over the past few years we have investigated the educational and social needs of the students in the schools.

Most of the advice, however, seems rather more rational, resembling in this respect the Oxford don, who, we were told, invited a teacher into his study, sat down and asked the teacher to tell him what he thought of the school.

Now tell me, what is a sixth-former's life like?

Even in newer universities, too many don't rest on their laurels and wait, no doubt by virtue of their inordinate belief in their matchless excellence, for the students to come to them.

or with siblings and friends who have gone on to university.

The schools we visited in Birmingham were selected on the basis of type of school (independent, comprehensive, sixth-form college) and location (from well-heeled suburbs to an area in which 95 per cent of the population belonged to social-economic groups 5 and 6). We aimed for a "good mix", and that's what we got.

We had already reached the conclusion after our visit to London that contacts between schools and universities were inadequate. Little that we saw and heard in Birmingham served to change this opinion.

On our last day, visiting two widely differing schools, we were told by the heads of modern languages of an approach made to them by a local university, offering to come and talk about courses.

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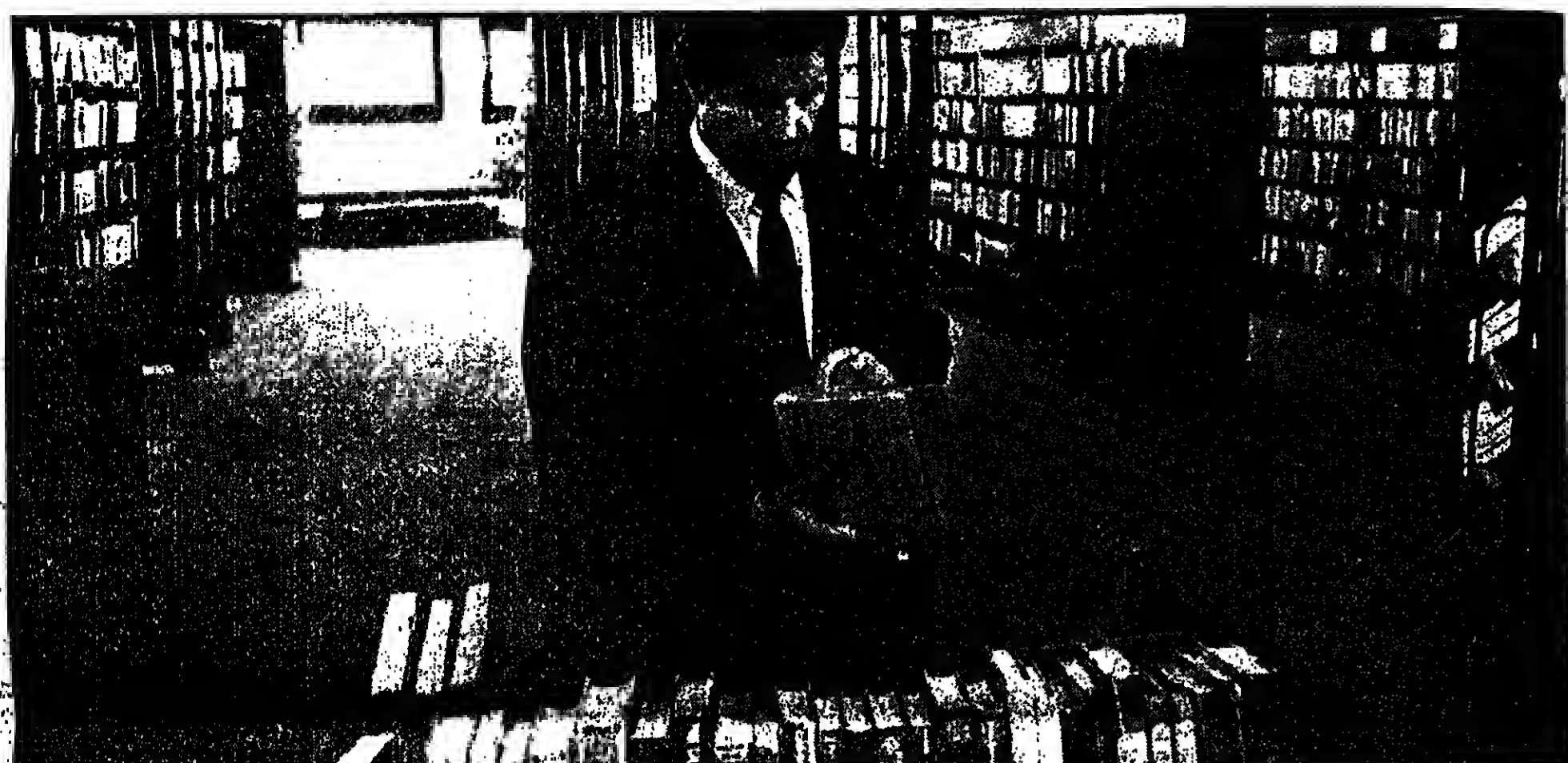
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us, almost aggressively. "What do you hope to gain by visiting those places?", and

endpage

Partners in the market place

James Boyle calls on the library service and adult education to get together in the face of threats to their existence



Librarians would recognize the customers who requested a booklet offered in association with a recent BBC Continuing Education series. They were predominantly women, 72 per cent from the top three classes and the majority, it seems, were married.

James Boyle, a group profile to those of us in adult education. It describes the core clientele for many of the non-vocational adult education courses given by local authorities. Annually, less than 5 per cent of the adult population is attracted or feels the need to take an adult education course. Some rough calculations show that only 30 per cent of the population will return to education during their adult lives. The same figure—30 per cent—comes to mind as a figure sometimes quoted as the average patronage figure for libraries. It does not seem far fetched to guess that education and information seekers who use libraries and participate in adult education are the same people who follow BBC Continuing Education courses and buy (or send for) the print support materials. That group of adults is better off and better educated than average. Libraries and BBC Continuing Education have a simple customer group in common.

Traditional adult education, however, is in decline. Provision of classes has dropped alarmingly in the last few years, from a figure then thought unacceptably low by the educationists who produced the Russell and Alexander Reports. For BBC Continuing Education, however, the market for education continues to improve. Even in these times of cuts and unemployment, interest and cash commitment is there in the community, to be aroused and channelled. BBC modern language series continue to flourish. But the day of self-help and study groups is with it. The "black" and "white" is the motto of the family on the make in Angus Wilson's *No Laughing Matter*. Groom the regular customers, your pillars of the community (and, perhaps, members of the library committee), by encouraging the many self-help activities which will increasingly replace the statutory programme. BBC Continuing Education courses will be correspondingly more important in this respect.

There is obvious scope for cooperation in marketing support materials—booklets, books and audio tapes—to the customers. Time for libraries to go beyond warehousing resources and into the discriminating area of "sales" links, leaving the customers, by aggressive marketing, to participate in courses of study. BBC Continuing Education courses—programmes, books and study groups—are ideally suited to such treatment by libraries,

because they arrive on a marketing wave, being broadcast into homes throughout the country.

Liko our leading department stores, libraries already trade on national standards of excellence and reliability. This is remarkable in a non-centralist system based on local authorities. Certainly, where libraries choose to promote off-the-peg courses like those of BBC Continuing Education, the market will operate and some will go faster than others.

It is necessary, however, to look down-market at the customer we in adult education have failed to win. About 65 per cent of adults never go back to education after leaving school. That is almost certainly the same sector of the population which libraries have failed to win as users.

Most of the major BBC Continuing Education series are in the tradition of favourite non-vocational adult education classes: craft programmes, language learning and history studies are dominant successes. It is the motivated—those who have leisure to make choices and seek the materials—who are best served. The working class audience is still to be won. The Literacy series, the programmes for childminders are spectacular exceptions which prove the rule of 20 years' standing.

In the United Kingdom, the working class population has not been the backbone of the traditional courses provided in adult education classes and by air by educational broadcasting. For the lower socio-economic groups, studies are dominant successes. It is the motivated—those who have leisure to make choices and seek the materials—who are best served. The working class audience is still to be won. The Literacy series, the programmes for childminders are spectacular exceptions which prove the rule of 20 years' standing.

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There are, however, two heads of department in charge of BBC Continuing Education. Television and Radio whose management and production policies are creating major success-pulling successes. Perhaps most the departments will in strength and confidence consider bolder marketing strategies for themselves.

For libraries, the lesson could hardly be more clearly written. They too have functions which have been historically as an invisible service within the local authorities. As the cuts bite deep, will anyone notice real cuts to an invisible service? There is protection in functioning in the political open spaces, in being seen. Both BBC education and libraries have been trampled underfoot as the new generation of political economists have stamped by.

Were an advertising agency to handle a "library account" the marketing strategy might be interesting. Would the good Messrs. South advise the retention of the name libraries at all? If library services were examined, over half the activity is likely to have "infotracas", "Community" or "Support" in its name. It is the image of libraries which bears the brunt of the cuts.

potential. Betta Midler's joke should send horror into the hearts of the library profession. Underneath this brassy exterior, it's just a librarian.

Libraries are strong. They have what every retailer desires—a nationwide chain of outlets in both high street and suburbs. They sell the customers whose monopoly, libraries will enjoy as adult education fails to one way. Making the more obvious links with the media is another.

If Theresa Reinhold hits the screen, Zola to the punter. Novels are not the same as dramatized novels. They constitute a separate experience. As for libraries, concerned television should be no more than an advert for the author and, consequently, the library service.

There is a world to be won in the area of non-book activities, as long as libraries remember that they are disseminators of printed and taped word, and not counsellors. Discretion means packaging to various public. Whilst others are bleeding to death after the cuts, libraries are wounded.

Working class needs have been greater. Libraries should look at their remaining resources and concentrate on assets (the central and mobile premises) while developing their community information services. They must find a way of developing national networks and, in the process, present themselves as providers of servicing agents.

Finally, libraries must become more active as retailers of services, as professional ends as potential collaborators with other agencies.

The excellent staff at Ridgmont Street, no doubt aware of these needs, are in the vanguard of the United States. They have a retail shop within the library, a free library, there will always be a progressive Californian and the community. The threat to libraries is not the future. It is the present.

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